

Baptism And the Holy Spirit

by Stella Paterson

The word “baptize” means “*make whelmed.*”¹ The Greek dictionary shows no definition for “whelmed,” but Webster’s dictionary shows two words merged to make the word “*whelm.*” Those two words mean “to overwhelm” and “to cover,” so the resulting definition of “whelm” is “*to submerge, cover, or engulf.*”² Strong’s Greek dictionary shows that the word “baptize” is also translated “wash.”

There are two types of baptism mentioned in the Bible: the ceremonial baptism in water and the baptism by the Holy Spirit. Water baptism is widely used by many denominational and non-denominational groups. Whether this baptism should be by sprinkling or by total immersion is controversial. But that is not the issue here. We must get back to the true meaning of baptism according to the Bible.

John the Baptist introduced Jesus, the One Who had “existed before him,” saying, “***I did not know Him; but that He should be revealed to Israel, therefore I came baptizing with water.***” John told how he “*saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and He remained upon Him.*” John recognized Him because he had heard the words, “*Upon whom you see the Spirit descending, and remaining on Him, this is He who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.*”³ **John came baptizing with water so that Jesus should be revealed to Israel** – Jesus, the One who would baptize with the Holy Spirit.

John baptized Jesus to show Israel this One Who came to die so that He might give His Spirit to be the Baptizer. Israel had been given the Law of Moses by which to live in acknowledgement of God as the “*LORD God*” and to reveal their sinfulness.⁴ The Gospel (good message) of Jesus Christ was given so they might no longer be bound to the Law, but be freed by God’s Spirit. They could now be washed clean by the Spirit’s presence and become alive unto God instead of dead in sin. (See the “**Law of Flesh**” for more on Israel and Moses’ Law.)

The ritual of water baptism is intended to signify the death and burial of flesh and the rising to new life by the power of the Holy Spirit. Do we fail to comprehend the profound significance and symbolism attached to water baptism by immersion? For the most part, baptism in water has become so ritualistic the true message is lost.

Tongues

The baptism of the Holy Spirit has been given a much different meaning. There is one sign in particular that is looked for, which is “speaking in tongues.” Even though it means “*fiftieth*”⁵ (day after Passover), the word “*Pentecost*” has been adopted from the book of Acts and made into a denomination. There is a lesson

in "Passover before Pentecost." It is this: we can only receive Pentecost if we have first come by way of Passover – the Cross.

Sadly, in some circles, the use of tongues is cherished as a sign of "having arrived." But where is the teaching on the fruit of the Spirit? The fruit should be of far greater significance than the evidence of tongues. Paul said in 1 Corinthians 13 that speaking in tongues is nothing but a jangling noise if we have no love. A believer who has been baptized by the Holy Spirit will unconsciously emanate the "fruit of the Spirit" – and it begins with love.

For one who is freed from his flesh and full of the Holy Spirit, the unknown language (tongues) is a precious gift to be utilized in times of prayer. It is a language only God and His Spirit can understand. There is no demon in hell that can comprehend the language of the Holy Spirit and attempt to interfere in an answer to prayer. The Holy Spirit, through the unknown language, makes intercession **for** the saints according to the Father's will. 6

The Apostle Paul explained to the Corinthians that there are tongues and interpretations of tongues, as well as guidelines for their proper operation in a group setting. 7 But that is another topic. The focus here is on the primary work of the Holy Spirit to be Life from God in one who is truly born from above. It is a work of God's Spirit when He comes to dwell in a surrendered vessel, renovating (regenerating) His new abode. **His purpose is to purify us from all the flesh life, and to be the Power living through us.**

In his letter to Titus, Paul said, "*But when the kindness of God our Savior, and His love toward man appeared, not by works done in righteousness which we did ourselves, but according to his mercy **he saved us, through the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost.***" (Titus 3:4-5)

No works of righteousness done in our own strength can begin to compare to the work of God's Spirit. **We cannot duplicate fruit of the Spirit in our lives. No counterfeit fruit could ever please God or touch the lives of others as effectively as the real thing – we NEED God's Holy Spirit.**

Paul, in his wonderful admonition to the Church, cautioned us to be careful how we walk, not being foolish in these evil days. "*And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit.*" 8 It is more desirable to be full of the Spirit than to be intoxicated with wine. A young friend said to me one time, "There is no high like the Most High."

Why another tongue?

Before Jesus ascended to the Father in Heaven, He charged His apostles to wait in Jerusalem to be baptized with the Holy Spirit as the Father had promised. They asked Him if this is the time when He would restore the kingdom to Israel.

But He told them it was not for them to know times or seasons that only the Father knows. Then He said to them, "*But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.*" (Acts 1:8 NKJV)

Only when they had been filled with the Holy Spirit could they be witnesses to Him, because the Holy Spirit was the Power within Who would minister through them and point others to Jesus. Yes, there were other tongues as Acts 2:4 tells us, but look at the reason: They were in Jerusalem; it was fifty days after Passover, and Jesus had ascended to the Father. His Spirit came from Heaven with a sound like a rushing, mighty wind filling the room with His presence. The people saw upon each other what appeared to be tongues of fire, and all were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages. When the Jews from other nations heard those full of the Spirit speaking in their languages, they were amazed and said, "**Are not all these who are talking Galileans? Then how is it that we hear, each of us, in our own (particular) dialect to which we were born?**" (Acts 2:7_b-8 Amplified)

Only the miraculous power of the Holy Spirit, speaking through those who were filled, could get the attention of the devout Jews who had been steeped all their lives in the legalism of Moses' Law. Peter could have preached in his own strength with full understanding of the truth, but without this work of the Holy Spirit, the true Church never would have been born. And today, without the work of the Holy Spirit no preacher will be effective.

Paul spoke the simple truth when he wrote that the mind of the flesh is enmity [Greek: *hostility*] ⁹ against God. **If we are in the flesh we cannot please God.** But if the Spirit of God dwells in us, we are not in the flesh but in the Spirit. "**But if any man hath not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.**" (Romans 8:9_b) Here, we see the difference between death and Life. The flesh produces dead works, while the work of the Spirit yields fruit.

1. Greek #907
2. Webster's New World Dictionary – Simon & Schuster Inc. 1986
3. John 1:30-33 NKJV
4. Chapter 5
5. Greek #4005
6. Romans 8:27
7. 1 Corinthians 14
8. Ephesians 5:15-20
9. Greek #2189